What is claimed is:

1.   During an Internet session where a user is viewing a web page that includes a prompt for an email address, a method of creating and forwarding an email forwarding address to said user comprising the steps of:

        creating and storing an email forwarding address for the user that is automatically associated with said web page, said email forwarding address re-directing email addressed thereto to a target email address associated with said user; and

        sending said email forwarding address to said user to enable said user to use said email forwarding address to satisfy the email address prompt.

2.   The method of claim 1 wherein said request is made by said user on-line, said method further comprising the step of examining the request to determine the user making the request and the web page that includes the email address prompt.

3.   The method of claim 2 wherein said request includes an identifier assigned to said user and the web page address of said web page.

4.   The method of claim 3 wherein said request further includes the title of said web page.

5.   The method of claim 2 wherein said request is generated by activating a control on the toolbar of a web client application.

6.   The method of claim 2 wherein said request is generated by activating a web control on said web page.

7.   The method of claim 2 wherein said request is generated in response to selection of a menu choice of a web client application.

8.   The method of claim 2 wherein during said sending step, said forwarding email address is displayed to said user in a second browsing window separate from a browsing window in which said web page is displayed.

9.   The method of claim 8 wherein said forwarding email address can be dragged or copied from said second browsing window into the browsing window in which said web page is displayed.

5   10.   The method of claim 2 wherein email forwarding addresses created for said user and web page addresses associated with said email forwarding addresses are stored in a user account, during said examining step, the web page address of said request being compared with the web page addresses in said user account, if said web page address exists in said account, bypassing the creating and storing step and sending the email
10   forwarding address associated with the web page address to said user.

11.   A system for creating and forwarding email forwarding addresses comprising:

       a web server communicating with client computer systems over Internet
15   connections, said web server receiving requests from said client computer systems generated by users of said client computer systems who during Internet sessions view web pages that include prompts for email addresses; and

       a database server creating and storing email forwarding addresses for the users that are automatically associated with said web pages in response to requests
20   received by said web server, said email forwarding addresses re-directing email addressed thereto to target email addresses associated with said users, said database server conveying created email forwarding addresses to said web server, said web server sending said email forwarding addresses to said users to enable said users to use said email forwarding addresses to satisfy the email address prompts.

25

12.   The system of claim 11 wherein each request includes an identifier assigned to the user generating said request, and the web page address of the web page being viewed by said user, said database server using said identifier to associate the email forwarding address with said target email address.

30

13.   The system of claim 12 wherein said database server stores the email forwarding addresses created for each user and web page addresses associated with said email forwarding addresses in an account associated with said user, said database server comparing the web page address in each request received from a user with the web page

addresses in the account of said user, if said web page address exists in said account, said database server bypassing the creating and storing of said email forwarding address and sending the email forwarding address associated with the web page address that exists ub said account to said web server.

14.　　　　A method of forwarding a received email addressed to an email forwarding address to an associated target email address comprising the steps of:

upon receipt of an email from a sender, determining the target email address associated with the email forwarding address of said email;

composing a forwarding email that is addressed to said target email address and that includes a reply address, said reply address including information identifying the email forwarding address and validation data; and

sending the forwarding email to said target email address.

15.　　　　The method of claim 14 wherein said information identifying the email forwarding address includes an identifier representing the storage location of said email forwarding address.

16.　　　　The method of claim 15 wherein said validation data is a code computed using the identifier and the sender's email address.

17.　　　　The method of claim 16 wherein said reply address is encoded.

18.　　　　The method of claim 17 wherein said forwarding email further includes at least one selectable web control that can be selected to disable said email forwarding address.

19.　　　　The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of storing a record when said at least one selectable web control is selected to associate disablement of said email forwarding address with said sender.

20.　　　　The method of claim 19 wherein said at least one selectable web control is to be selected when an email forwarding address is to be disabled due to receipt of spam.

21.   The method of claim 17 wherein upon receipt of a reply email generated in response to said forwarding email, said method further comprises the steps of:

validating the email address of the replier;

decoding the encoded reply address in said reply email to determine the email forwarding address and the email address of the sender;

examining the validation code to authenticate the validity of the encoded reply address;

reply-masking the reply email so that said reply email is addressed to the email address of the sender and includes a reply address identifying the email forwarding address; and

sending the reply email to said email address of the sender.

22.   The method of claim 21 further comprising the step of examining the email address of the replier to determine if reply-masking is authorized.

23.   The method of claim 14 wherein at said determining step, if the received email is directed to an invalid email forwarding address, said method further comprising the steps of:

disregarding received email; and

returning a status message to the sender indicating that the email was accepted for delivery.

24.   The method of claim 23 wherein invalid email forwarding addresses include non-existent email forwarding addresses and disabled email forwarding addresses.

25.   The method of claim 14 wherein at said determining step, if the received email is directed to a deleted email forwarding address, said method further comprising the steps of:

disregarding received email; and

returning a status message to the sender indicating that the email was not accepted for delivery.

26.   A system for forwarding received email addressed to email forwarding addresses to associated target email addresses comprising:

a mail server receiving email directed to said email forwarding addresses ;

a database server in communication with said mail server, said database server determining the target email addresses associated with email forwarding addresses identified in email received by said mail server and conveying said target email addresses to said mail server, wherein said mail server in response to received target email addresses composes and sends forwarding email addressed to said target email addresses, each said forwarding email including a reply address, said reply address including information identifying the email forwarding address and validation data.

27.   The system of claim 26 wherein said information identifying the email forwarding address includes an identifier representing the storage location of said email forwarding address.

28.   The system of claim 27 wherein said validation data is a code computed using the identifier and the sender's email address.

29.   The system of claim 28 wherein said reply address is encoded.

30.   The system of claim 29 wherein each forwarding email further includes at least one selectable web control that can be selected to disable said email forwarding address.

31.   The system of claim 30 wherein said database stores a record when said at least one selectable web control is selected to associate disablement of said email forwarding address with said sender.

32.   The system of claim 31 wherein said at least one selectable web control is to be selected when an email forwarding address is to be disabled due to receipt of spam.

33.   The system of claim 17 wherein upon receipt of a reply email generated in response to a forwarding email, said database server decodes the encoded reply address to determine the email forwarding address and the email address of the sender and examines the validation code to authenticate the validity of the encoded reply address, if said encoded reply address is valid and authentic, said mail server reply-masking the reply

email so that said reply email is addressed to the email address of the sender and includes a reply address identifying the email forwarding address prior to sending the reply email.

34.   The system of claim 33 wherein said database server also examines the email address of the replier to determine if reply-masking is authorized.

35.   The system of claim 26 wherein said mail server discards email directed to an invalid email forwarding address and returns a status message to the sender indicating that the email was accepted for delivery.

36.   The system of claim 35 wherein invalid email forwarding addresses include non-existent email forwarding addresses and disabled email forwarding addresses.

37.   The system of claim 36 wherein said mail server discards received email directed to a deleted email forwarding address and returns a status message to the sender indicating that the email was not accepted for delivery.

38.   A system for forwarding a received email addressed to an email forwarding address to an associated target email address comprising:

means for determining the target email address associated with the email forwarding address of said email upon receipt of an email from a sender;

means for composing a forwarding email that is addressed to said target email address and that includes an encoded reply address, said encoded reply address including information identifying the email forwarding address and validation data; and

means for sending the forwarding email to said target email address.

39.   The system of claim 28 further comprising:

means for validating the email address of the replier upon receipt of a reply email generated in response to said forwarding email;

means for decoding the encoded reply address of said reply email to determine the email forwarding address and the email address of the sender;

means for examining the validation code to authenticate the validity of the encoded reply address;

means for reply-masking the reply email so that said reply email is addressed to the email address of the sender and includes a reply address identifying the email forwarding address; and

means for sending the reply email to said email address of the sender.

40. In an email system, a method of handling received email message directed to invalid email addresses comprising the steps of:

disregarding received email directed to invalid email addresses; and

returning status messages to senders indicating that the emails were accepted for delivery.

41. The method of claim 40 wherein invalid email forwarding addresses include non-existent email addresses and disabled email addresses.

42. A method of monitoring spam comprising the steps of:

assigning email forwarding addresses to users to enable users to convey email forwarding address to email contacts so that emails sent to users by said email contacts are directed to said email forwarding addresses;

forwarding emails directed to the email forwarding addresses to the users associated therewith; and

maintaining a record of email forwarding addresses that have been cancelled by users due to receipt of unsolicited email directed to said email forwarding addresses.

43. The method of claim 42 wherein said record identifies web page addresses associated with email contacts to which cancelled email forwarding addresses were conveyed.

44. The method of claim 42 wherein each forwarding email includes a control that can be selected to generate a delete email forwarding address request.